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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000513

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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TSPL, SW

SUBJECT: Discussion with Sweden on Next Steps to Launch the "Next Big Thing" (Alternative Energy Partnership)

Ref: (A) State 64364 (B) Stockholm 399 (C) Stockholm 202; (D)  
Brussels 1031

¶1. (U) Summary: Swedish officials are enthusiastic about launching the "Next Big Thing," a U.S.-EU Alternative Energy Partnership modeled on the U.S.-Sweden partnership. State Secretary for Energy Ola Altera said he will contact Sweden's Perm Rep in Brussels as soon as he had reviewed this with his counterparts at the Foreign Ministry. The Swedes know that in order to do this during their Presidency, they must act with some urgency now. Embassy and Ministry officials discussed possible timing for a public launching of the alternative energy partnership by senior U.S. and Swedish officials, perhaps in the lead-up to the U.S.-EU Summit. End Summary

¶2. (U) On August 11, Charge and Embassy officials met with State Secretary of Energy Ola Altera and Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Energy officials to follow up on the Charges' July 1 discussion with Foreign Ministry State Secretary Frank Belfrage (REF B), in which Belfrage welcomed the U.S. proposal to launch an U.S.-EU alternative energy partnership (REF A) modeled on the U.S.-Sweden alternative energy partnership, the "One Big Thing." Altera and the other officials were anxious to launch the EU-wide partnership, dubbed the "Next Big Thing," during Sweden's EU Presidency and noted the need to act urgently. Altera suggested a joint USEU and Swedish approach to the Commission, and said that after consulting with Belfrage and the Prime Minister's State Secretary Gustav Lind, he would contact Sweden's Perm Rep in Brussels.

¶3. (SBU) The U.S. and Swedish sides discussed timing of next steps, and what might be a suitable forum for the possible announcement. Altera was interested in some kind of event where Minister for Enterprise and Energy Maud Olofsson and U.S. Secretary of Energy Secretary Chu could announce the initiative, perhaps in the run-up to the U.S.-EU Summit, planned for November 2009. One suggestion was at the first meeting of the Energy Technology Working Group of the U.S.-proposed EU-U.S. Energy Council. Altera noted that although he knew his EU colleagues favored the Energy Council proposal, he was not current on the status of acceptance of the proposal by the Commission or EU Council as a Summit deliverable. The two sides discussed the natural linkage between the Energy Council Proposal's work on technology and NBT, but shared the concern that launching of the NBT not be held up by any differing Member State or Commission perspectives on the Council. Altera noted that it might be wise to not link the NBT too closely with the Energy Technology working group of the proposed Energy Council yet, until we know what will happen with the Energy Council.

¶4. (U) Swedish officials noted that the Informal Meeting of the EU Competitiveness Council in Umea (October 14-16, hosted by Minister Olofsson) could potentially be a suitable forum for an NBT announcement. Altera noted that the private sector, both SME's and large corporations, will have a large role at the meeting, which

will have eco-efficient economies as its main theme. The Swedes said they had invited U.S. Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Carol Browner to this event, but have not heard whether she will attend.

15. (SBU) Embassy Commercial Counselor Frank Carrico noted that the announcement of the Next Big Thing partnership should be preceded by actual projects being developed. This led to discussion of the considerable activity on EU and national clean technology standards, including standards on energy efficiency in buildings and sustainable construction. Altera said the Swedish Presidency's aim is to reach an agreement on the Directive on the energy performance of buildings, as well as two other proposals on energy efficiency (labeling and tires), by December.

16. (U) Altera said his office would strategize about how possibilities for alternative energy commercial partnerships could be presented for firms from the U.S. and EU countries. He suggested using the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise and its counterpart organizations throughout Europe, the Am Cham, and/or the Chambers of Commerce to establish a mechanism for all sizes of companies to make their work known and seek connections with other partners. The Embassy Public Affairs Counselor suggested setting up something like a private sector or non-governmental "U.S.-EU green connect site" where information about U.S. and European firms could be posted and shared. Altera promised to get back to us soon about suggested next steps.

17. (U) To help publicize the partnership, the Embassy Public Affairs Counselor suggested a draft Op-Ed possibly signed by a U.S., Swedish and Commission official.

GOS participants:

Ola Altera, State Secretary for Energy issues at the Ministry of

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Enterprise and Energy

Frank Nilsson, Press secretary to Energy Minister Maud Olofsson

Bengt Toresson, GOS' OBT liaison

Elisabeth Thand Ringqvist, Political advisor to Maud Olofsson

(replacing Anders Nyberg who is on AL)

Maria Brogren, Energy Division, responsible for Energy research

USG Participants:

Charg Bob Silverman

A/DCM Laura Kirkconnell

SCO Frank Carrico

PAO Chris Dunnett

ECON FSN Annika Henningsson

SILVERMAN